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Creating Modern Traditions in Balinese Performing Arts

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Notes

Introduction

> In this view, tradition is not simply the surviving residue left undisturbed by advancing yet incomplete modernization. Rather, it is essentially new, modern, contemporary, a recent construct. The recognition of and an attachment to the ***pastness*** of certain cultural materials (what we come to call ***traditions***) is itself, in this view, a product of modernity.[1]

The discourse on modernity in Bali concerns the issues related to the processes of cultural transformation that have been reshaping the living traditions of Bali since the last years of the colonial period early this century. What is often implied by the notion of ***modern*** Bali, is the complex of practices, trends, and ideas introduced from the West during the time of Dutch colonial rule,[2] and later adopted and enhanced by the Balinese themselves. It was during the colonial period that certain types of transformations of Balinese artistic life, which have often been labeled as ***modern,*** have begun to occur. In this sense, the idea of Balinese ***modernism*** refers specifically to a certain time frame. On the other hand, ***modernization*** also implies certain qualities of the transformations which have first appeared during that time. The concept

of ***modernization*** generally assumes that pre-colonial Bali was a ***traditional*** society, relatively untouched by the outside influences, and thus relatively unchanged. It was only with the encroachment of colonial rule that the Balinese began transforming not only their ***traditional*** art and practices of everyday life, but also their way of experiencing the world, often by looking toward Western models.

In this essay I intend to present a different view of the development of Balinese performing arts, and to clarify what the often misleading concepts of ***traditional*** and ***modern*** may mean in the context of Balinese culture. I will focus solely on Bali, sometimes within a broader context of old Javanese kingdoms or the contemporary Indonesian state. Hence, I will not draw on Western theories of modernity and modernization. While Western notions of modernism imply a general trend in the methods, styles, and philosophy of modern artists, involving a break with the traditions of the past and a search for new modes of expression, modernity in Bali concerns a particular way of dealing with the cultural heritage of that area, a way specific to Balinese culture. Western Modernism overlaps only historically with modernism in Bali, and the discourse and paradigms that have been built around it are not applicable to the Balinese setting.

The modern and traditional in Bali exist side by side. On the one hand, Balinese culture is famed for its resilience in keeping traditional art forms preserved through the centuries, especially in the face of rapid modernization in this century. On the other hand, a history of Balinese arts, including performing arts, points toward a dynamic of constantly changing artistic forms and styles. A historical analysis of the development of various art forms in Bali shows that the Balinese have always been open to integrating foreign influences into their tradition, and that they have always placed a high value on dynamic innovation. This apparent paradox which juxtaposes the Balinese role as guardians and preservers of tradition with that of creative innovators, is the main focus of this essay.

By using the term ***modernism***, I will discuss the transformations that Balinese culture has undergone in the twentieth century. In this understanding, modernism in Bali refers to the process of cultural transformation that has spread over the island in three successive waves during this century. The first wave occurred in the late colonial period in the 1920s and 1930s with the opening of public schools, the rise of modern (Western) education under Dutch colonial rule, and early tourism. The second wave followed the proclamation of Indonesian independence, when Bali became part of the Republic of Indonesia and began contributing to the development of the new national culture. The third wave occurred in the 1970s and 1980s with the expansion of tourism and the emergence of new experimental productions brought about and inspired by Western artists, Balinese artists and scholars educated in the West, as well as by a new generation influenced by TV, film, and the advancement of technology.

Each of these waves was followed by a major scholastic discourse on the processes of transformation of the traditional arts, since early in the twentieth century, the changes within the tradition that were considered ***modern*** were seen as forces that threatened to destroy or uncontrollably and irrevocably change the most valuable aspects of that tradition. Thus, since the early anthropological writings on Bali in the 1930s, until the present day, modernity and

tradition have been considered contesting and mutually exclusive powers. However, this polarization can be mitigated by another perspective which perceives ***tradition*** not as a relic of the past, but as a contemporary construct.[3] According to Kessler, in what we may call ***traditional*** societies, there is no conscious, ***ideologized*** attachment to the legacy of the past. It is usually when tradition is threatened that a self-awareness arises, and that the reference to the past is consciously advanced. Hence, ***a view of the traditional' past is invoked to serve as an alternative to disruptive modernization.***[4] It was not until the threat of modernity appeared (and was articulated as a threat) that the Balinese began consciously advancing the notion of tradition as an alternative. While in the analyzing and defining tradition one can see an attempt on the part of the Balinese to define their identity in the face of rapid cultural change, the ongoing discussion on modernity shows their effort to control and channel these changes.

To understand what is modern in Bali, it is necessary to establish some understanding of what is traditional. What is it that makes Balinese theatre Balinese, be it modern or traditional? Is a ***modern*** Balinese production less Balinese than a ***traditional*** one, and if yes, why? In this essay I will explore possible answers to these questions by looking at the Balinese past as well as the present.

In the first two sections I will investigate the social and artistic mechanisms that are historically innate to the Balinese performing arts. If by modernism we assume a process of continual change, it is important to understand what it is that is being changed and what are the social and artistic implications of those changes. In the first section I will investigate the social function of the traditional Balinese arts, presenting Balinese performing arts as ***applied arts*** or ***arts in service***, primarily in service to religion and politics. In the following section I will investigate the mechanism of cultural appropriation, or localization of foreign elements into traditional Balinese culture. These two sections will thus present a paradigm of traditional Balinese performing arts as they relate to Balinese society and to the influences and models imposed by or imported from the outside world. The last section of this essay will investigate the changes that have occurred within the Balinese society in this century that have affected these two aspects of Balinese performing arts.

Thus, I will focus on the function of the performing arts in society and their relation to foreign influences, rather than the form of any particular theatrical genre. In other words, I intend to contribute to the discussion of the ***Balineseness*** of the performing arts in Bali historically rather than aesthetically.

Social Functions of Traditional Performing Arts

Throughout its history Balinese theatre has had two main social functions: one religious and one political. Even though the early twentieth century saw the introduction of an element of self-conscious art which was not ***art-in-service*** of something but rather an artistic expression of an individual, this tendency never became fully integrated in the Balinese artistic tradition. Rather, the performing arts are still considered to be (as they have been throughout history) a

communal, collective obligation to create beauty in service to society and religion.

The religious function of the performing arts is evident in the religious ceremonies in the temples, and in the private ceremonies most often concerned with the various rites of passage (birth, wedding, tooth-filing, etc.). In both instances, the dances, dance-dramas, or other theater forms presented are regarded as both individual and communal offerings to the gods. Together with food offerings and prayers, these performances are given for the enjoyment and entertainment of the divinities and ancestral souls as a sign of loyalty and devotion to this invisible realm whose protection is indispensable for the well-being of the community. In doing so, the performers and those who commission the performances are serving a specific religious function in constantly preserving the ***symbolic universe*** of the Balinese people.[5]

The political function of Balinese theatre is similar to its religious function. From the ninth or tenth century until the early twentieth century the Balinese courts played a primary role in the development of performing arts. It did so through the training of dancers and musicians, the organizing and financing of performances, and the creating of new performing styles as well as new norms for their execution. Although court performances always followed the religious calendar and thus served religious functions as well, their content and form reflected their political purpose in showing the strength and splendor of the kingdom and legitimizing the rule of a particular dynasty by showing its links to old kingdoms of the ***golden era*** of Balinese history (Majapahit or Gelgel) and, indirectly, its links to the gods.[6]

The vast range of performing art forms in Bali have always had this dual function of preserving the symbolic (religious) universe of the Balinese people and legitimizing an image of a social and political order of a particular kingdom or dynasty. These two functions have always been inseparable in that a particular king or dynasty could only legitimize their rule by showing themselves as perfect embodiments of traditional values, norms, and regulations that were codified in the religious universe. In this way, the political reality constantly strengthened the symbolic one, for only a strong symbolic reality could give confer legitimacy on any given political reality.

These two functions have been singled out because they are the pillars on which the performing arts tradition of Bali is based. They are the key factors which make a Balinese dance, dance-drama, or a wayang performance recognizable as Balinese even when a specific form is penetrated by foreign (usually Western) influences. They maintain strong ties between social life, the political structure and religion on the one hand, and performing arts on the other. Just as the Balinese have managed to preserve their religion more or less intact through the centuries,[7] they have guarded their traditional arts with the same enthusiasm to assure that they remain ***Balinese*** regardless of the continually changing social context.

Three main challenges emerged in the twentieth century. The first was the process of modernization of Balinese performing arts which started in the 1920s with the expansion of tourism. Western artists and scholars from this period introduced the idea of a self-conscious art that functions as an artistic expression of an individual. This idea triggered a new fashion among

the Balinese artists who turned to creating new dance forms by looking toward Western models. Just as a number of Western scholars and Balinese artists began to fear that the traditional Balinese arts were in serious danger of washed away by the tide of rapid modernization, a second challenge appeared: the commercialization of the arts. This commercialization actually prevented the decline of traditional arts, for the authorities (first Dutch, then Indonesian) launched organized efforts to preserve the traditional art forms as economic commodities for the tourist market.[8] Many traditional art forms were preserved as a result, although this preservation often entailed serious threats to the arts in the form of standardizing, categorizing, and museumizing a large part of a living tradition within Balinese theater. Many traditional forms were taken from the villages and temples, recontextualized for the tourist market, and then assimilated back into the villages and temples. The third challenge chronologically overlapped with the first two: the demise of the courts and the decline in power of most of the Balinese nobility who were the major patrons of the performing arts. This problem was successfully ameliorated, if not entirely solved, by the foundation of two major government sponsored performing art schools in Bali: The College of Indonesian Arts and The High School of Indonesian Music in Denpasar.[9] These institutions took over the role of preserving the traditional art forms, a role formerly exercised by the courts.

From the perspective of the 1990s, one may conclude that Balinese theater does not seem to be any less Balinese than it does in earlier descriptions in the writings of Miguel Covarrubias, Walter Spies, or Margaret Mead. Nevertheless, Balinese theater did undergo significant changes. In this essay I will argue that what makes these changes less apparent are the two functions that the performing arts play in society, the religious and political. These functions keep the theatrical tradition inseparable from its religious and political contexts. In serving these two functions, the Balinese performing art tradition appears to be virtually the same as it was centuries ago. The demands of Balinese social organization (the basis of which has also remained more or less intact through the centuries) placed upon the artists (themselves part of that organization) have likewise contributed to the resilience of the performing arts, both socially and aesthetically.

Whether they are in service of politics, religion, or economy, the performing arts of Bali may be categorized as applied arts, or arts-in-service. The fact that the Balinese do not have the word for ***art*** supports this theory. Artistic creativity in Bali has always been subordinate to the demands of its social and political order.

Modern Traditions: Interculturalism and Tradition

Although material evidence is scant, Balinese artistic tradition can be traced back to pre-Hindu times. Animism, with its complex network of rituals, was one of the major preconditions for the early development of performing arts in Bali. Animistic spirit belief gave rise to numerous rituals that were direct or indirect predecessors of numerous theater forms of a later origin.[10] These practices, carried out through various rituals, established the basis on which the performing arts would later develop, more often than not keeping their ritual roots strong in their content and salient in their style and form.

The primary sources of information about performing practices in pre-Hindu Bali are several ritual-dance-dramas still extant today. These dance-dramas, such as the Berutuk rite or the Sang Hyang rituals, have preserved strong animistic elements and show little or no Indian influence. These ritual performances do not directly correspond to the Western conception of ***theater.*** They are religious rituals full of magical meaning to the performers and other members of the community. If the fine line between theatrical action and reality can be defined by understanding the first as a symbolic action and the second as primarily an instrumental action, Balinese dramatic rituals blur this distinction. Although they include elements of theater (primarily music and dance), they are meant to serve religious and magical purposes and are not intended for the aesthetic pleasure of the audience in the Western sense of the term (although elements of aesthetic pleasure and entertainment are always present).

The later development of Balinese performing arts may be described as a continuous transformation of this indigenous tradition under the influence of elements imported from foreign cultures. The Hindu elements in Balinese religion and social and political organization are imported from India, arriving in Bali through Java. Even the Sang Hyang ritual dances which are the closest to what may be considered indigenous Balinese culture still show some Indian influence: the basic body position (agem) with legs wide open and turned outward, the angular break of the elbows, closeness to the ground, and the focus on the upper torso with the emphasis on hand, head, and eye movements.

Between the tenth and the fifteenth centuries, when the histories of Bali and Java overlapped, and when the cultural life of the courts of both islands were united, the assimilation of Hindu-Javanese culture took place. The Ramayana and Mahabharata were imported from India in their kakawin version; Malat together with various other Panji legends, the wayang kulit, elements of dance costumes and accessories were all imported from Java. Hence, what we now consider to be the traditional Balinese performing art heritage is, seen in hindsight, a confluence of indigenous Balinese animistic traditions, Indian religion, literature and elements of social organization, and Javanese court traditions.

Here we encounter another important factor that contributes to the famed resilience of performing art traditions in both Java and Bali: the mechanism of cultural appropriation, or the localization of the elements of the foreign cultures into the indigenous Balinese or Javanese tradition. For the Javanese, the Pandava brothers -- the main protagonists of the Indian epic Mahabharata -- are no less Javanese than prince Panji.[11] The story, of course, occurs in Java, not in India. This is not to say that a more educated Javanese or Balinese is not aware of the origin of the two epics. However, the historical fact that a particular art form originated in India does not make it any less Balinese or Javanese.[12]

Intercultural borrowing and the localizing of foreign elements into the indigenous tradition so that they gradually become an intrinsic part of Balinese culture are thus not new to Bali and were introduced well before the expansion of tourism and advancement of Western culture in the twentieth century. The history of Balinese performing arts is the history of intercultural

exchanges and borrowings, the history of creating and changing traditions, or simply the history of continually creating modern traditions. The Ramayana and Mahabharata were just as modern when they first appeared as a dramatic source in the area as wayang listrik in Java and Bali is today. The process of ***modernization*** that has spread through the island in this century is, in this sense, fully a continuation of what is known as the history of ***traditional*** and ***intercultural*** Bali.

It was not until the 1920s that the image of Bali as a paradise and as a repository of ancient Majapahit and old pre-Hindu Balinese culture first appeared. Adrian Vickers points out how untenable and misleading this view of Bali is:

> The idea, adhered to both Westerners and Balinese, that the island's culture was traditional, and hence unchanged, masked the changes taking place in the Balinese society. Bali has been caught up in the modern' world since the Dutch first came in the sixteenth century... The changes of the 20th century simply accelerated the process of change.[13]

Bali's first contacts with the West Portuguese and Dutch explorers, merchants, and missionaries began early in the sixteenth century. By the end of the seventeenth century, the Dutch had established a complex trade network with the whole archipelago. The common assumption that Bali played but a minor role in this trade network led to another mistaken assumption that Balinese culture was spared from changing under Western influences until the final encroachment of the Dutch colonial rule in the late nineteenth century.

In his analysis of the period between the fall of Majapahit until the establishment of the Dutch colonial state in Bali, Clifford Geertz argues that the common assumption about Bali's isolation from both Western and Islamic influences during these five centuries has been exaggerated by scholars. This common assumption is based on the fact that Bali was marginal to the complex trade economy which played a crucial role in the history of the Indonesian archipelago at that time. Geertz argues against the idea that ***modern Bali is a "museum"in which the culture of pre-colonial inner Indonesia has been preserved intact.***[14] There is no reason to believe, Geertz continues, ***that Bali, for all its isolation from the mainstream of Indonesian development after the rest of the archipelago was Islamized ... did not change for 350 years after the destruction of Majapahit.*** Geertz's theory of ***endogenous*** development of Balinese society in this period may prove valuable for the study of the arts and culture that developed during this time:

> In the first place, although Balinese life did change significantly between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries, the change was to a very great extent endogenous. In particular, two revolutionary events that elsewhere radically transformed the social and cultural order, Islamization and intense Dutch domination, did not occur in Bali. Thus, though the island's history is no less dynamic than that of the other Indicized regions of the archipelago, it is far more orthogenetic and a good deal more measured. Bali in the later half of the

> nineteenth century may not have been a mere replica of Bali in the middle of the fourteenth, but it was at least fully continuous with it.[15]

Geertz's theory of endogenous development of Balinese culture during these five centuries is valuable in that it refutes the common assumption that Balinese society remained intact during this period, since it was on the periphery of major trade routes. Although Balinese society and culture did change, these changes are less apparent because of the relative absence of foreign influences and the lack of substantial historical documentation from this period.

The performing arts also flourished and, although seemingly untouched by Western or Islamic influences, they nevertheless underwent significant changes. The seventeenth through nineteenth century court dances, according to the generally accepted taxonomy of Balinese performing arts, belong to the balih-balihan category. These are secular dances although they may be presented in the temple as part of a religious ceremony. In such a case, the context determines their religious significance. When performed in the temple they are meant to entertain both celestial and human audiences.

Legong is one of the most important and the best known dances from this period. In its present form, Legong incorporates elements of various performing art traditions: pre-Hindu ritual dances (especially Sang Hyang Dedari) and Hindu Javanese traditions (Gambuh) combined with the early twentieth century kebyar music style. Its dramatic material is drawn from Lasem, another version of the Panji stories.

In his essay about modern Balinese dance, I Wayan Dibia points out that the process of creating new performing art forms by adopting elements from foreign cultures, or rearranging elements of older forms into more modern creations, can be traced back to (at least) the sixteenth century.[16] Three prominent traditional Balinese dance-dramas can be used as examples: Gambuh, Wayang Wong, and Calonarang. Gambuh is one of the oldest dance-drama forms in Bali, and is generally accepted as a heritage of ***premodern***, traditional Bali. However, Dibia reminds us that Gambuh was born in the process of acculturation between Java and Bali, and its iconography and music and dance style belong to the Hindu-Javanese tradition, not that of old Balinese. Wayang Wong (seventeenth century) is the result of combining elements of Gambuh with those of wayang kulit, while Calonarang (nineteenth or early twentiethth century) is but a more recent composite of elements of Gambuh (pagambuhan), legong (palegongan), and Barong dance (babarongan).[17]

Gambuh itself is an interesting example of the process of intercultural borrowings in pre-twentiethth century Bali. Gambuh stories are taken from four major sources: the Panji cycles: stories about an East-Javanese prince who searches for his lost love Candra Kirana; Malat, a Balinese variation of the Panji stories in which the prince is shipwrecked in Bali and marries a Balinese princess; Rangga Lawe, the historical account of the revolt of Rangga Lawe against King Hayam Wuruk (Hindu Java, fourteenth century); and Amad Mohammad, a Javanese account of the life of Mohammad (Islamic Java). The last story is rarely performed today. It, however, stands as but one among a number of examples of Islamic influences in the performing arts of

Bali.

These three examples (Gambuh, Wayang Wong, and Calonarang) point toward a mechanism of development of Balinese performing arts which is in this essay defined as a perpetual creation of modern traditions. It can be assumed that all three dance-dramas were just as modern and non-traditional at the times they appeared as Drama Gong or Sendratari were in the 1960s. The major difference is that Gambuh has long been granted the status of a representative of Balinese ***tradition***, while Sendratari and Drama Gong (both often criticized by Western scholars for not being traditional enough) are still in the process of waiting to be acknowledged as traditional, and more important, as Balinese.

Once again, I would like to ask what the real meaning of modernism or modernization is when applied to Balinese arts, and what aspects of the modern development of the performing arts are still considered to be a threat to Balinese ***tradition***? In the previous section of this essay I have pointed out that it is the social functions (primarily religious and political) of the performing arts that bring us closer to the meaning of ***traditional*** and ***Balinese,*** not iconography or dance and music styles which, as we have just seen, have been changing throughout Balinese history. In the next section I will analyze the ***modern,*** twentieth century developments of performing arts in Bali in regards to their changing function and place in society. In this understanding, negative aspects of Balinese modernism (or modernisms) are related to the processes of commercialization and individualization of the arts which resulted variously from the growing tourist industry in Bali, the more frequent and more intimate contacts with the West, urbanization and the spread of modern technology.

Modernization: Cultural Tourism and Experiments with Tradition

Colonial Bali: 1900s - 1940s

The war with the Dutch in the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century together with the puputan rites in 1906-1908 were marked by some of the greatest massacres in Balinese history.[18] After the Klungkung puputan in 1908 the last direct descendants of the Majapahit emperors were gone. The aristocracy who survived the puputan were deprived of their main sources of income and power, and were no longer able to sponsor large ceremonies. Many court gamelan were ***handed down to village music and dance organizations, which were eager to add the royal splendor of superb artistic performances to their community, by having the support of musicians, dancers and teachers, who were previously employed by the court.***[19]

By 1912 Dutch colonial rule in Bali was firmly established. The Dutch intended to display Bali's culture in all its splendor to the outside world in order to create a positive image of their colonial policy and to atone for the blood bath for which they were responsible. The result was the so-called ***Ethical Policy*** which was to preserve traditional Balinese culture and protect it from changing under Western influences. This policy led to the expansion of tourism in the 1920s and 1930s, forever changing the cultural life of Bali.

Colin McPhee, one of the scholars and artists who frequented Bali at this time, described Balinese dance as ***pure, impersonal art.***[20] According to McPhee, in Balinese dance ***the individuality of the dancer is of no importance. His performance may have unusual finish and personal charm, but with these he does not seek to express himself.*** It is exactly this quality of Balinese dance that began changing in this century. The art, which was never intended to be a means of expression of an individual, but rather of the community, became highly individualized under Western influence. Painters and sculptors started signing their work. For the first time certain dances and musical compositions became as famous as the artists who created them.

A new musical form appeared early this century and created a trend which spread across the whole island in less than a decade: kebyar. It was embraced with such an enthusiasm and in such a short period of time that very quickly it became not only ***traditional*** , but its sounds soon evolved into an aural synonym for Bali. But how traditional is kebyar?

A number of ethnomusicologists have already pointed out that kebyar developed at the expense of the older musical genres of Bali, especially the gamelan gong gede and semar pagulingan. Tilman Seebass wrote that ***kebiar was ruinous for the traditional gamelan genres, because everywhere it led to the dismantling of old gamelans through the melting down and recasting of old gong kettles and gangsa keys.***[21] Seebass adds that it was a mistake to promote kebyar, ***since it brought about almost everywhere the destruction of the gong and the semar pagulingan, the main pillars of the ritual and ceremonial life in villages and courts.*** [22] Although developed at the expense of old gamelan forms, kebyar quickly crossed the bridge from being modern and revolutionary to being traditional and authentically Balinese.

New dances appeared providing adequate visual accompaniment for the new musical style. The most famous name in the performing arts of the time was I Mario, the father of the kebyar dance. His famous creations (Oleg Tamulilingan and Kebyar duduk are the most well-known) were but the first in a series of new creations of kebyar dances which are now generally accepted as the very essence of the ***Balineseness*** of the Balinese performing arts. These dances are neither religious nor narrative in nature, and can be performed merely for the enjoyment of the audience without any adherence to the religious calendar. Their musical style, iconography, alphabet of movements, and movement styles are so unlike those of Gambuh, Legong, or Wayang Wong that the concept of the ***traditional*** in Balinese performing arts (and they all belong to this category) appears to make little or no sense at all.

The move from the ***traditional*** to the ***modern*** is somewhat easier to understand through an analysis of the changing social and cultural functions of particular forms than through the contemplation of their aesthetics. Besides the development of new forms, many old rituals and religious dances were performed outside of their religious context. In some villages various ritual dances came to be performed on a daily basis, again without regard for the religious calendar or festivals.

The period between the 1920s and the 1940s was also significant for Bali's integration into a new nation and acquiring a new identity as part of a modern, cosmopolitan and independent republic. A new generation of educated Balinese shared in the excitement of the nationalist movement that was growing in other Indonesian provinces. The Balinese began to take part in what was emerging as a national, Indonesian art.[23] The tension between traditional customs (adat) and modern ideas and practices appeared for the first time as a main topic of literary and dramatic works in Bali. As Bagus noted, ***the Surya Kanta movement, with its related journalistic and literary activities, was the most important of the early attempts by Balinese intellectuals to transform their society into a more modern one.***[24] In his essay Bagus discusses the play Woman's Fidelity, one of the very few examples of literary or dramatic works in Bali reacting immediately and explicitly to the changing social and political context in the country. This play was concerned with caste ideology. It was written as a reaction to the 1910 marriage law imposed by the Dutch, which forbade men of lower caste to marry women of higher caste. The play is only one example of the spirit of the Surya Kanta movement whose participants were commoners opposing both Dutch colonial rule and the injustice of the Balinese caste (and class) system. However, since the problems of everyday life never found an important place on the Balinese stage, this lonely attempt to dramatize contemporary problems in theatre was quickly abandoned, and the Surya Kanta movement as a whole quickly lost its momentum.

During the revolution, Bali experienced another major bloodshed. When, after Japan's capitulation, the Dutch forces returned to Bali on March 2, 1946, they found the island in a state of turmoil. Around 2000 KNIL troops landed in Sanur, expecting to be welcomed by the Balinese, but about two weeks later, fighting broke out. According to Robinson, ***Over the course of the Revolution (1945-1949) roughly 1,400 Balinese died on the Republican side alone, and a further 700 died fighting on the side of the Dutch.***[25]

Robinson describes his article as ***a modest response to the provocative silence*** which surrounds this period. It should be noted at this point that neither this nor other devastating moments of Balinese history have ever found their way into the literature or drama in Bali. In the Western world periods of great disaster, like wars and major social conflicts, have always been the most valuable sources for dramatic and literary work. Unlike Western artists, the Balinese are silent about the dark moments of their history. No matter how horrifying the social reality may be, Balinese art always responds with its eyes closed to reality by evoking the splendors of Majapahit or Gelgel courts, or the universal values prescribed by the great Indian epics. If we keep in mind that the traditional function of Balinese art is to maintain the symbolic universe and to legitimize the political one, it may be understandable why theater in Bali is unfamiliar with tragedy. The performing arts in Bali are never subversive, they are devotional and reifying.

Contemporary Bali: 1960s - 1990s

In the mid 1960s, after an attempted communist coup, Bali underwent another dramatic

political and social transition. This episode in Balinese history never reached the theater. Again, the performing arts responded to this reality with the usual silence, turning instead to the distant past and recalling the splendors of the old kingdoms. The political turbulence of 1965-1966 did, however, bring about a new theater form: Drama Gong. Vickers explains its origin:

> drama was created as an antidote to the political factionalism of the time. It was a new entertainment that filled the space of the speechmaking and political rallies which were ended when any forms of leftism and overt political activity on behalf of the masses were eliminated. Rightist Balinese were involved in its establishment, and dangerous political speeches became harmless theater, paralleling the ***depoliticization*** process in politics and the new doctrine from Jakarta of the ***floating mass.***[26]

One of the priorities of the New Order government was to promote international tourism as one of the best ways to minimize the federal budge deficit. Bali was the perfect place for this. In the 1970s ***tourism became a top economic priority in the province, second only to agriculture.***[27] For the Balinese tourism meant prosperity; it also meant a serious threat of cultural pollution. Still, the goal of the Cultural Tourism Policy seemed to be clear: ***It was expected to develop and promote simultaneously culture and tourism ... by taking advantage of Balinese culture to attract tourists, while using the economic benefits of tourism to foster Balinese culture.***[28]

According to the Balinese authorities, this policy brought a cultural renaissance to the island. It revived the Balinese interest in their own traditions, and stimulated their artistic creativity. Many authors, however, would argue that the benefits of tourism were nullified by the desecration, simplification, and popularization of the traditional performing arts. Others believe that the proved resilience of Balinese culture would keep it safe from threats of cultural pollution.[29] They believed that the influx of tourist performances was strictly reserved for the tourist audiences, while the economic benefits from them would help to maintain indigenous Balinese art, reserved clearly for the Balinese audience, free from the negative aspects of tourism. Picard, however, fears that the Balinese can now no longer tell the difference. He questions ***whether the Balinese are actually in a position to discriminate between their cultural performances according to the audience for whom they are intended.***[30]

Some of the popular dances are those which have been removed from their religious and dramatic contexts, and transformed into solo dance (Baris, Topeng, Jauk); some are simplified versions of court dances (Legong); others are original works created for tourists (Panyembrama, Oleg Tamullingan). These dances are often performed in a package, simply called Legong Dance.

In the 1950s, Bali Beach Hotel started opening each ***Legong Dance*** with Pendet, as a welcome dance for tourists. However, ***this caused a great distress to the Balinese religious authorities, shocked that the tourists were being treated in the same way as the gods.***[31] Thus, a new ***welcome dance*** was created, entitled Panyembrama. It replaced the old

traditional dance in greeting the tourists. The problem was that this new creation eventually made its way back to the temple festivals, replacing the Pendet.

In Kaja and Kelod, Bandem places on the kaja side of the Balinese universe [32] all the dance forms which have been preserved as traditional, and which in turn serve as forces of preserving the tradition. Those elements that are still considered modern and unwanted by those Balinese who carry on the mission of preserving traditional art forms are placed on the kelod side of the spectrum. As a consequence, the closer to the kaja side a particular form is, the more likely it is to be called traditional or pure Balinese. Of the various forms on the kaja side, the Sang Hyang rituals provide the best example. On the other hand, the more modern the trends, ideas, and forms are, the closer they are to the kelod extreme. Modern disco clubs eximplify this extreme, often associated with the demonic underworld. Still, this is only a static consideration of the kaja/kelod paradigm. The dynamic aspect of this model views the negative aspects of modernization as an ongoing shift from kaja to kelod, from sacred and traditional to secular, modern, and Western. The Balinese reality shows that the process of modernization also implies a potentially dangerous shift from kelod to kaja, with the Pendet/Panyembrama phenomenon offering a perfect example. These dynamics may be illustrated by any other example from the history of Balinese performance when a new (modern) idea or form is fully assimilated into the culture so that it becomes a tradition. In the nineteenth century, Legong was a modern dance form although it has its roots in Sang Hyang and Gambuh. Due to its popularity it gradually began to influence its own source, with the Sang Hyang dances incorporating many elements from Legong. In this example the kaja-to-kelod traffic happened without the stimulus of any foreign influence and did not evolve into a controversy. The displacement of the sacred Pendet by the Panyembrama in the temple ceremonies is but another darker and more dangerous side of the same process.

The secular Kecak was created in the 1930s. Although a relatively modern form, it is considered to be a traditional Balinese dance, for, like Legong, it has its roots in the old Sang Hyang ritual. Since the time of its origin, Kecak has undergone numerous changes. As I Wayan Dibia has noted, ***While the essential elements of the production, the multi-layered, interlocking, rhythmic voices and the primal look and spirit have remained basically the same, many other aspects have been stimulated by other contemporary performance practices.***[33] I Wayan Dibia has been one of the most enthusiastic pioneers in experimenting with this form. In 1979 he directed a large scale Kecak production involving a chorus of 500 men. This production was commissioned by ***the regent of Badung as a highlight to a formal ceremony celebrating a special award from the Indonesian government.***[34] In 1982 Dibia directed another experimental Kecak production on the beach, involving some 250 performers, some of whom chanted while afloat in the water.[35] I Wayan Dibia holds a Ph.D. degree from UCLA and is a famous and respected dancer and dance teacher (currently the Dean of STSI Denpasar). He experiments with tradition without losing interest or respect for it, injecting fresh enthusiasm into the living tradition, presenting valuable examples of how to make traditional art forms more accessible to the modern audiences. The example of Dibia's work demonstrates that it is not necessary to keep the traditional forms locked in a museum in order to preserved them--an approach that leads to a

museumizing of the culture. Such strict adherence to tradition also risks alienating the young who, faced with the rigidity of the tradition, may cling even tighter to the more exciting challenges from the West.

Conclusion

The process of commercialization of the Balinese performing arts is usually seen by scholars as a disease that threatens to destroy the tradition of Balinese art and is rapidly reducing the artistic values of traditional art forms. Two arguments can be advanced against this negative view of the process of modernization and commercialization of the performing arts in Bali. First, the period of Cultural Tourism introduced a new economic function to the arts. It was easily adopted by Balinese artists because this economic element was simply added to the first two functions of the performing arts, the religious and political. Criticizing the commercial aspects of the arts means criticizing it from a Western point of view which considers all art forms to be symbolic expressions of creative individuals bringing their intrinsic emotional and intellectual responses to bear on the reality around them. This idealized view of the arts is unknown to the Balinese. What they know as ***art*** is what we would call art in service, or applied art, which always servs a specific function in the society and is thus instrumental rather than symbolic. In this sense, performing for the gods in the temple or for the kings in the palace is not much different to a Balinese than performing for the tourists. Picard points this out in a sarcastic composite of quotes: "***In the temple we ask for a blessing, and at a hotel we ask for money***," and "***It's a ritual dance to ask the gods for a lot of tourists***"[36]

The second argument concerns the artistic values of the tourist performances as opposed to those given in the traditional context. A famous Balinese dancer and dance teacher once told me that it takes more skills and a higher level of training of to participate in a performance for tourists than is required in a temple performance. In a temple, a performer always gives his best and the gods do not judge his talent but the depths of his devotion. Tourists are not as tolerant as the gods and they want to get what they paid for. Also, tourists want to see the ***real Bali*** on the stage, the pure Balineseness as was described in their coffee table books. They do not care for experimental work which often involves adoption of the elements of Western art. This has kept the Balinese tradition alive, for it is traditional work that has a market value. On the other hand, this has led to a danger of ***museumizing*** the Balinese art, depriving it of the ability to change and develop according to its natural laws.

It seems that in the 1960s Balinese artists finally adopted the Western- derived idea of theatrical performances being intended and created solely for the aesthetic pleasure of the audiences. That is, they adopted the idea of theater as ***art*** which allows for (and indeed, often calls for) an intentional artistic creativity on the part of a choreographer and performer, and is not meant as an instrumental action in any sense other than to entertain the audience.[37] Still, modernism, in this specific sense of advocating individualism (as opposed to the communal tradition) is still confined to the two major government sponsored performing art schools--STSI and SMKI--and has not, as yet, affected the living tradition in Balinese villages.

It is not possible to predict what the future generations will bring into the existing layered whole of Balinese performing arts. Old kingdoms have long been replaced by the modern Indonesian state, and many old state rituals have been replaced by the new ones. Theater as entertainment has long been competing with television and film, while theatre as an educational tool has been overpowered by the mass media and the increasing availability and variety of printed literature. Despite the ongoing debate concerning the dangers of modernization, and despite the continual changes in the forms and styles of particular dances, dance-dramas, and musical compositions, the theater of Bali, by and large, seems to have preserved at least one of its inherent qualities: its intricate connection with the religious life of the Balinese.

In the first part of my paper, I have suggested that as long as the religious foundation of Balinese culture remains strong and relatively unchanged, the modern era may affect the form of particular performing art genres (and that only to a certain extent), while their innermost quality of serving the religion will remain as strong as it has been throughout history. The styles and forms of various performing art genres, as I have explained in the second half of this essay, have been continually changing. Hence, even the most recent and most experimental changes seem to be fully continuous with the pattern apparent in the history of Balinese performing arts in which change seems to be the only constant factor. Bearing in mind the tremendous importance of religion in Balinese society, one may sarcastically ask whether a Balinese dance piece heavily influenced by rock music or jazz dance movements, if performed in a Balinese temple with appropriate spiritual preparation and offerings and as a gift to gods, would eventually come to be considered a legitimate part of Balinese tradition. A few Balinese artists, with whom I reluctantly shared this concern, simply shook their heads with the explanation that the Balinese gods would still prefer to hear gamelan. As long as the gods are those who dictate the degree and the quality of change of Balinese artistic life (and the gods in Bali are of a very discriminative taste, and not always easy to please), the Balinese traditions will remain Balinese, despite the fact that these traditions will continually change, as they always have.

Notes

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1Clive S. Kessler, ***Archaism and Modernity: Contemporary Malay Political Culture,*** in Joel Khan, and Francis Loh Kok Wah, Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), 134.

2 From the middle of the nineteenth century, until 1942, Bali was under Dutch colonial rule which was gradually imposed over the whole island. In 1868 the Dutch occupied the northern and western parts of Bali, and established a center for their colonial government there. By 1908

they occupied the rest of the island.

3 Kessler, ***Archaism and Modernity: Contemporary Malay Political Culture,*** 134.

4 Kessler, ***Archaism and Modernity: Contemporary Malay Political Culture,*** 135.

5 The idea of ***symbolic universe*** is taken form Bruce A. McConachie's article ***Towards A Postpositivist Theatre History*** in Theatre Journal, 37, no. 4 (Dec. 1985): 479. In this section of his article, McConachie further develops Kenneth Burke's perception that man makes symbols to ameliorate the chaos of existence: The symbolic universe shapes time and history, places a contemporary social hierarchy into a context of transcendental order,locates the meaning of death and shelters the individual from the terror of formless experience. (p. 479)

6 According to Geertz, history in Bali is seen as a gradual decline from the classical ***golden era*** to the present. Many Balinese court ceremonies and performances were, in effect, ***re-creating*** an ***exemplary center*** on the model of these classical kingdoms. See Clifford Geertz, Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 13-19.

7 By religion I do not mean the system of religious beliefs only, but the rich network of practical applications of these beliefs into a complex system of daily rituals and temple ceremonies, together with the regulations of social behavior which are still inseparable from the religion itself. By religion here I mean the everyday life of the Balinese.

8 These efforts started with the ***Ethical Policy*** under the Dutch, and were enhanced in the early 1970s under the policy of ***Cultural Tourism.***

9 Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia (in further text STSI) and Sekolah Menengah Karawitan Indonesia (in further text SMKI).

10 Animism assumes the existence of spirits and demons that reside in everything in and beyond the physical world. These spirits (called buta or leyak in Bali) are believed to be charged with magical power which can either harm individuals or communities, or bring them prosperity. To assure the cooperation of spirits people needed to establish some kind of communication with them. This communication could be carried out by people who possess a special kind of ***magical power*** necessary to establish contact with this invisible realm, in order to propitiate gods or appease demons for the betterment of the community.

11 The Kurawas would probably belong to a foreign kingdom which is at war with Java or is in any other way annoying the good Javanese. The tendency on both Java and Bali is to present the ***bad guys*** as foreigners.

12The Sultans of the Central Javanese Mataram kingdom identified themselves as descendants

of the heroes in the Mahabharata as they were represented in the wayang kulit. During this period several genealogies were written that traced the lineage of these Javanese rulers all the way back to wayang purwa epics (Serat Kanda and Babad Tanah Jawi).

13 Adrian Vickers, Bali, A Paradise Created (Singapore: Periplus Editions, 1996), 131-132.

14 Clifford Geertz, Negara, 7.

15 Clifford Geertz, Negara, 8-9. Adrian Vickers in his introduction to Being Modern in Bali: Image and Change. supports Geertz's theory: ***The view of Bali as somehow apart or cut off from the rest of the archipelago was largely a colonial construction, a combination of divide-and-rule policies and the idealization of Bali as a cultural paradise.*** See Being Modern in Bali: Image and Change, ed. Adrian Vickers (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1996), 8.

16 I Wayan Dibia. ***Dari Tari Tradisi ke Tari Kreasi/Moderen,*** paper presented at the Indonesian Dance Seminar in Mataram, Lombok, July 1997.

17 I Wayan Dibia. ***Dari Tari Tradisi ke Tari Kreasi/Moderen,***4.

18 When faced with the more powerful and better armed Dutch army early this century, several Balinese rajas chose to exercise the rite of puputan rather than suffering the humiliation of being defeated and enslaved. When the Dutch surrendered Denpasar in 1906, they were welcomed by a strange, solemn procession that emerged from the main gate of the court. Hundreds of court officials, guards, priests, their wives and children, led by the raja, dressed in white ceremonial clothes, came out to fight to the end, and to die with dignity. When they approached the startled Dutch army, the entranced men and women began attacking the well-armed soldiers with golden daggers (kris) or with bare hands. The soldiers answered with the fire. When the raja was killed, all of his wives stabbed themselves to death over his dead body; the others either followed them or ran towards the soldiers, only to be killed by the guns. At the end, the way to the palace was free to the Dutch, except for hundreds of corpses that covered the way. The same rite was repeated in other Balinese courts. After the Klungkung puputan in 1908 the last direct descendants of the Majapahit emperors were gone. Only a few survived.

19 Martin Ramstedt, ***Indonesian Cultural Policy in Relation to the Development of Balinese Performing Arts,*** in Danker Shaareman, ed. Balinese Music in Context, (Winterthur/Schweiz: Amadeus Verlag, 1992), 61.

20 Colin McPhee, ***Dance in Bali,*** in Traditional Balinese Culture, ed. Jane Belo, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 290.

21 Tilman Seebass, ***Kebiar in the 1920s and 1930s,*** in Vickers, Being Modern in Bali, 86.

22 Seebass, ***Kebiar in the 1920s and 1930s,*** 86.

23 I Gusti Ngurah Bagus, ***The Play Woman's Fidelity: Literature and Caste Conflict in Bali,*** trans. Hildred Geertz, in Vickers, Being Modern in Bali, 92.

24 Bagus, ***The Play Woman's Fidelity: Literature and Caste Conflict in Bali,*** 92.

25 Geoffrey Robinson, ***State, Society and Political Conflict in Bali, 1945-1946.*** Indonesia no. 45 (April 1988): 2.

26 Adrian Vickers, ***Modernity and Being Modern: An Introduction,*** in Vickers, Being Modern in Bali, 25.

27 Michel Picard, ***Cultural Tourism*** in Bali: Cultural Performances as Tourist Attraction. p. 41.

28 Michel Picard, ***Cultural Tourism in Bali,*** 42.

The others are primarily Indonesian artists and scholars. In most of his work I Made Bandem emphasizes the positive intentions as well as the results of the policy of Cultural Tourism.

30 Michel Picard, ***Cultural Tourism in Bali,*** 44.

31 Michel Picard, ***Cultural Tourism in Bali,*** 52.

32 Kaja and kelod, in Balinese language literally mean ***toward the mountains*** and ***toward the sea***, respectively. Aside from indicating the spatial orientation, kaja and kelod symbolize the spiritual orientation in Balinese universe. In this understanding, kaja, the direction toward the mountains, especially the sacred mountain Gunung Agung which is believed to be the abode of the gods, symbolizes the sacred aspects of this universe. Kelod, direction toward the sea, which is believed to be inhabited by demons and evil spirits, is the symbol of demonic forces and spiritual impurity. Kaja is, thus, sacred, divine, and pure, while kelod is demonic, impure, and often profane.

33 I Wayan Dibia, Kecak: The Vocal Chant of Bali. (Denpasar: Hartanto Art Books Studio, 1996), 53.

34 I Wayan Dibia, Kecak, 61.

35 I Wayan Dibia, Kecak, 61.

36 Michel Picard. ***Cultural Tourism in Bali,*** 37.

37 One may add that these new productions also serve an educational function in that they make the audience more familiar with the old epic literature, as well as Balinese history and the legends which are dramatized on the stage. However, it is hard to say that creators of these new productions have this in mind when thinking through their art work, and that they are deliberately aiming their performances to serve an educational purpose.